

THE USE OF ICTs IN ACHIEVING ECONOMICS OBJECTIVES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The role played by ICT in almost all spheres of human endeavour for greater productivity cannot be over-emphasized. There is the need to move Nigeria with the rest of the world further in this information age when technology is advancing. In the teaching – learning situation in our schools a variety of methods and techniques available has greatly replaced the traditional methods. The overall objectives of this paper is to discover the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) resources available to achieve the objectives of teaching economics in our secondary schools. This paper looked at the objectives of economics studies, challenges of the use of ICTs for its development and came up with some recommendations and conclusion

Economics whatever level it is introduced in schools and with whatever range of students, it is concerned, must seek to satisfy three criteria

- It must seek to develop a knowledge and understanding of economic dimension of the environment in terms of basic concepts of economics.
- It must seek to develop the capacity to think clearly and objectively
- To achieve economic literacy numerical (Eze, 2003)

Given the range of the criteria that economics would strive to satisfy in the schools, the inclusion ~~of academic knowledge~~ of economics in the school curriculum becomes an increasing obvious need. The acquisition of this knowledge of economics and understanding should not be left to chance operations. A fundamental frame work of economics therefore has to be laid at the secondary not just for those intending to pursue a career in economics but more generally as a part of the educational foundation which every student should have before leaving school. This will equip the student in fundamental areas of intellectual, vocational, cultural and national interest and development.

Indeed, the scope and variety of methods and techniques available for teaching and learning of economics objectives would have been greatly enhanced in recent years through a variety of technology. However, a number of factors which include the availability of information and communication materials in schools, lack of skills for management, attitudes of learners, the environment and time among others have continued to hamper their utilization in Nigeria secondary schools.

Choike-ICTD (2005) pointed that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have impact at different levels of the society especially toward enhancing teaching and learning. But the usage of ICTs in Nigerian secondary schools is grossly abused. ICTs come into being as a new instruments for which a wide variety of development is not generally placed in doubt. There is a correlation between ICTs and development and a positive association exists between both variables. Therefore, investment in ICTs is considered as an important investment.

The term information technology includes computers, ancillary equipment, software, firmware and similar procedures, services (including support services and related sources). Fadare (2008) highlighted that the computer with its enormous power and speed has acted as a great catalyst to scientific discovery. It has become an amplifier of human thinking, the of complex protein solving and the reposition for huge quantities of the World's data, information and knowledge. As noted by Fafunwa in Fadare (2008) we are in an age in which the amount of knowledge accumulated doubles itself every ten years. It should be noted here that the rush to embrace the modern technology by all sectors of the economy has left some essential questions unanswered.

They are:

- (a) How will the present practicing classroom secondary schools teachers be trained to use these technological devices and modern teaching aids in public school curriculum?
- (b) How would the present student-teachers be trained for the effective use of these technological devices and teaching aids?

Objectives of Economics Studies

The major aims and objectives of secondary education within our overall national objectives have been summed up of:

- (i) Preparation for useful living within the society

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- (iii) Developing in students the urge to inquire National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004).

The major objectives of economics studies in secondary schools as outlined by Kene in Eya, Maduewesi, Aboko and Zaria (2006:34) include:

- (i) Provision of intellectual training for better understanding of the world he lives and working of their economy.
- (ii) Provision of citizenship training and skills for self reliance.
- (iii) It gives the students the background which prepares him for a particular vocational such as auditing, accounting, banking or marketing.
- (iv) It provides critical thinking leading to inductive and deductive reasoning.
- (v) It helps in decision making in business.
- (vi) It transmits cultural values.
- (vii) It provides the tools for analysis of economic situation.

If proper teaching of secondary school economics curriculum is rightly done, self reliance would be maintained as well as fostering economic development of a nation, but as opined by Okam (2002:120) "the success of achieving the objective of teaching a subject depends on the teaching or the implementation". Some researchers and educators believe that the school system has failed and it is still failing in its responsibility to give students skills at all levels of educational system. According to a report by United Nation Educational scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO, 2002), show that reforms in achieving secondary education in Africa, Nigeria inclusive are often lacking because of the premises, equipment, labs, school manuals, teaching personnel are lacking in quality and quantity inspite of the huge financial efforts being made.

ICTs and Economics Objectives

Computers and the internet are continuing to transform the economy and the society, thus making the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in fostering development becomes more generally recognized. ICT is becoming a powerful tool for mobilizing civil society and the under utilized human resources. According Nagy (2003), ICTs particularly the internet is a net working infrastructure that can connect, empower and coordinate as well as deliver all kinds of services; e-government, e-accounting and auditing, e-finance, e-teaching and learning, e-health.

Poverty Reduction and Self-Reliance

Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) now plays a major role in all aspect of life, and has change the way people live, work and interact. It has a great role to play in the management of policies aimed at achieving development goal of an individual in particular and a country in general in data collection, creating network, informing greater number of people and in ensuring of greater accountability and governance (Economic Communication for Africa, 2005)

Academic Excellence

It is the effect of ICTs as pointed by Oni and Okeke (2008) on productivity, product differentiation, competing in time and accessing markets that most developing countries found their way, to use ICTs, to influence their competitive advantage and also enable them to participate in the international economy. This would include new areas such as call centres and back-office, out sourcing e-development could logically assess chances to use ICTs to expand employment and income opportunities for the poor both in urban and rural areas.

Development of intellectual training leading to inductive and deductive reasoning, decision making in business for vocations are core objectives of teaching economics in Nigerian secondary schools, this is not unconnected with the reduction of poverty in the country. To further stress on the contributions of ICTs to eradicate poverty, UNITES enumerated the following:

- Accessing online services that contain information about the job demand and offers;
- Establishing general e-exchanges simple e-commerce points for buying and selling goods and services at the local provincial or national level;
- Training people, particularly unemployed youths on employable ICTs skills;
- Creating online repositories of information by academics, extension workers, government officials and farmers to make knowledge on marketing, farming and fishing more widely available through graphic interface for easier information access;
- Establishing networks on wealth creation, management, leadership and employs, empowerment, encouraging of entrepreneurship, marketing management and marketing mix.
- Collaboration of online volunteers with business backgrounds and expertise, providing advice to onsite volunteers and community members regarding business management and techniques.

ICTs and Secondary Education

Secondary education as defined in the NPE (2004) is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. Indeed, the right education by Nigerian children could be seen as a fundamental human right. Considering the use of traditional methods – lecture and teacher–talk–chalk–board which are considered almost obsolete as contended by Okam (2002), the method is teacher centered; classroom atmosphere is often characterized by formal arrangement of furniture, strict discipline and authoritative procedure and learning in the classroom may not allow many students the opportunity to have access to education in a changing world.

The use of ICTs may help transform the present isolated, teacher-centred and text-bound classrooms into rich, student focused and interactive knowledge in the physical and the psychosocial environments of the classroom. For instance, to make use of ICTs a web-based lesson and cyber guides methods and strategies may be used for lesson presentation.

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The web-based lesson as portrayed by Sam (2002) is an inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all of the information used by learners is drawn from the web. They are fashioned towards using the learners time, to focus on using information rather than looking for it. It also helps the learner to think analytically synthetically and evaluative.

The web-based work as contended by Warschauer in Ugwaja (2007) is of great contribution to the learners. To this end he recommends the electronic literacy skills in teaching and learning enterprise. This will not only help in achieving the objectives of instructions desired, but also help learners to develop the skills to navigate through, select, assess, manipulation and evaluate data as they use information communication technologies. With the world wide web (www) learners have access to an unprecedented amount of authentic information as well as the capabilities to publish and distribute their own multimedia 'information for any reputable or international audience. Economics education can therefore be greatly enhanced through the services provided by the world wide web one of the internet services.

In the Cyber Guides as posits by UNESCO (2002) provides a quick supplementary sets of activities for students and pre-service teachers as they explore specific pieces of literature. For every cyber guides there is a description of work edition for a teacher and student according to standard, which a teacher or students selects web sites and there is an assessment to test performance.

Challenges of the Use of ICTs

There are many problems that we must have to contend with in the use of ICTs in achieving the objectives of teaching economics in Nigerian secondary schools. The challenges include:

- The dividing fortunes of government in terms of financing Nigerian secondary schools, this affects the availability of infrastructure in our schools and network uses is costly.
- Inconsistency in government policy and lack of continuity due to political instability for instance between 1992 – 1996, we had four different ministries of education with different priorities.
- The application of ICT programme affect culture issues, thus institutions have to change behavior from cultural norms to make ICT become real in our schools in Nigeria.
- ICT usage depends mostly on electric power. The erratic power supply with resulting frequent breakdowns and very low voltage output in most parts of the nation will undermine the effective functioning of ICT installations.
- The dearth of qualified manpower such as programmes processing specialists to handle ICT installations effectively.
- Basic governance decision will call for certain policy revisions. Using ICTs to simply issue

Academic Excellence will not lead to citizen participation.

- Illiteracy due to low level of formal education as well as ignorance as to what ICT is all about.
- Brain-drain due to the search for greener pasture has sapped Nigeria's economy of most competent hands in computing and other ICT gadgets.
- Population explosion especially in urban secondary schools has been standing in the way of effective use of ICTs, because teaching should be practical and individualized, but under the present condition in our secondary schools, it will not be easy for teachers to cope due to large class size.

Conclusion

Information and communication technology is fast becoming today's educational requirement, because there is the need for increased in learning opportunities both for the teachers who implement the curriculum and students who are the recipients. This can only be effectively done through multiple and simultaneous avenue, availability of computer facilities, computer classrooms will enhance e-learning. Thus Nigerian secondary schools should be computerized in order to make learning and administrative processes to be more creative and independent

Recommendations

In order for Nigeria to move with the rest of the world in this information age the government should:

- Foster an enabling environment for greater ICTs use through measures such as support to increase competition in the telecommunication and ICT sectors, adoption of strategies and partnerships to enhance access and deployment at affordable costs as well as capacity development and incentives for enterprise.
- Sensitize the Nigerian IT industry and companies such as mobile phone operators – MTN, Global Com, Airtel etc can be encouraged and sensitized to invest in education of the future Nigerian students just as Cadbury Nigeria Plc is doing, ICT education and application in schools would be improved.
- Provide libraries to create information centers whereby users can retrieve information as required. Multi-media systems facilitate the searching of encyclopedias, which can be in compact disks rather than on shelf.
- Mandate the NUC, NCCE and NBTE to establish information centre to enable teachers exchange ideas with their counterparts world over.
- ICTs should be applied in business transaction of payment this will enhance individual and industrial purchases of goods and services.

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